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SUBJECT: CORREA EFFUSIVE; NOBOA SQUAWKS; VOTE COUNT  
CONTINUES

11. (SBU) Summary: Official results were temporarily delayed by Noboa's November 27 allegations of unspecified fraud and his demand that election authorities re-count the vote by hand in three coastal provinces. National election authorities disallowed the request as unjustified by election rules and ordered provincial election authorities to proceed with the count or face removal from office. As of this writing, the count continued, with 58% of results reported. The count is expected to continue for another 48-72 hours before final results are in. The OAS pronounced the election process as free and transparent. The Ambassador spoke with Correa on November 27, who agreed to meet at the end of the week. End Summary.

TSE Continues Official Count

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12. (U) Ecuador's Supreme Electoral Council (TSE) has counted 65.79% of the presidential votes. Correa leads Noboa by 62.62% to 37.38%. However, the populous Noboa strongholds of Guayas, Manabi and Los Rios have just begun counting votes after an interruption spurred by the Noboa camp. TSE officials predict they will likely finish counting votes in the next 48-72 hours, and we expect final results to be close the 56-43 average margin of exit pollsters.

Noboa Alleges Fraud; Calls for Re-count

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13. (SBU) Refusing to accept initial exit poll results and the Citizen Participation quick count, three-time presidential hopeful Alvaro Noboa told reporters late on November 26 that the exit poll and quick count system "was nothing more than a scenario to generate fraud." Noboa subsequently called for a vote-by-vote recount (much slower than the ongoing scanning and tabulation of vote table results) in the coastal provinces of Guayas, Manabi, and Los Rios (which make up his stronghold). Bowing to PRIAN pressure, provincial election tribunals in these provinces suspended their vote counts on the morning of November 27.

TSE Orders Provinces to Renew Count

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¶4. (SBU) Ecuadorian law provides for a re-count only after the national TSE has nullified the vote count results of a provincial electoral tribunal. To request nullification, candidates must appeal results of the provincial vote count to the national TSE citing specific irregularities. TSE president Xavier Cazar on November 27 re-affirmed these rules and the TSE board ordered provincial electoral tribunals to resume counting votes or be removed from office, as provided for by Ecuadorian election law. Manabi, Guayas and Los Rios reportedly resumed counting votes the afternoon of November ¶27.

#### OAS Rules Elections Clean

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¶5. (SBU) OAS Election Observation Mission (EOM) spokesman Sen. Jose Viera (Chile), congratulated Ecuador for conducting "calm" and "transparent" elections that allowed "the will of voters to be expressed freely." At a November 27 press conference, Viera said the OAS considers Correa the legitimate president-elect based on credible exit poll and quick count information. He also noted that the TSE is the only entity authorized to declare official results and confirmed that EOM members would observe the count process until the final results are confirmed by the TSE.

#### Gutierrez Offers Grace Period

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¶6. (SBU) Former President Lucio Gutierrez called on Ecuadorians to respect election results and to refrain from violent protest. He said he looked forward to working with Correa and would give the president-elect a honeymoon of a few months for Correa to get oriented before Gutierrez would decide whether to act in support of the Correa government or in constructive opposition. He criticized Correa's stance against an FTA with the U.S. and said Correa should maintain Ecuador's independence from Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez.

#### Null and Blank Vote Levels Normal

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¶7. (SBU) Since Ecuador's return to democratic elections in 1978, null or blank votes have ranged from 10 to 13% in the second round of presidential voting. According to preliminary quick count results from NGO Participacion Ciudadana, null and blank votes will likely total around 11% in this year's second round, well within historical norms.

#### Ambassador Calls Correa

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¶8. (SBU) The Ambassador spoke with Correa on November 27. Noting that the election results are not official yet, she congratulated him on his apparent victory and requested a meeting later in the week. Correa responded effusively, agreeing to a meeting, thanking the Ambassador for her call, and noting more than once that the U.S. is "pais amigo" and that good relations had benefited Ecuador for many years.

#### Comment

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¶9. (SBU) Noboa's pro-forma challenge to the count was rightfully rejected by the TSE on procedural grounds, damaging Noboa's credibility and his already limited ability to mobilize protest. If Noboa continues to challenge results without offering any evidence or specific fraud allegations, the PRIAN's new congressional delegation, which is maneuvering to comply with his wishes with election officials, could also emerge tarnished.

¶10. (SBU) Gutierrez' PSP, meanwhile, is increasingly playing the role of political linchpin: Gutierrez voters clearly broke overwhelmingly for Correa and Gutierrez is offering Correa face-saving alternatives to his planned constituent assembly and claims to be willing to lend a helping hand in

favor of political reforms to depoliticize the courts and promote representation. At this early stage, Correa has not wavered from his campaign line.

¶11. (SBU) The Ambassador will use her upcoming meeting with Correa to discuss areas of mutual interest, and signal key concerns relating to counter-narcotics cooperation and the importance of maintaining democratic stability.

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